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ABSTRACT

The "Report of the Holmes Group: Tomorrow's Teachers" (1986) impacted the teacher education reform movement. The epistemological methodology inherent in its proposal requires consideration to establish its philosophical foundations and to appreciate the special nature of its teacher education model. Comparison with a dissimilar epistemological methodology can highlight the Holmes plan--its various epistemological characteristics as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological methodology functions from a different frame of reference. Implications for a teacher education model are discoverable with Merleau-Ponty's writings. Knowledge--its definition, description, and the process of knowing--are considered by both the Holmes writers and by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The value of knowledge, its evaluation, and its content are conceptually of a different character and describe contrasting methodological models. Both epistemological methodologies are discussed separately and then compared/contrasted as epistemological methodologies inherent in a teacher education model. (Author)

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The Holmes Group Plan vs. A Phenomenological Scenario for Teacher Education: An Epistemological Methodological Comparison

Abstract

The Report of the Holmes Group: Tomorrow's Teachers (1986) impacted the teacher education reform movement. The epistemological methodology inherent in its proposal requires consideration to establish its philosophical foundations and to appreciate the special nature of its teacher education model. Comparison with a dissimilar epistemological methodology can highlight the Holmes plan--its various epistemological characteristics as well as its strengths and weaknesses. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological methodology functions from a different frame of reference. Implications for a teacher education model are discoverable within Merleau-Ponty's writings. Knowledge--its definition, description, and the process of knowing--are considered by both the Holmes writers and by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The value of knowledge, its evaluation, and its content are conceptually of a different character and describe contrasting methodological models. Both epistemological methodologies are discussed separately and then compared/contrasted as epistemological methodologies inherent in a teacher education model.

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With the Holmes Group (1986), the mind, a strong and vigorous intellect, holds first place in their knowledge theory. "The world of the mind," (p. 7) is a frequent reference as the dynamism of teacher, learner, and teacher education. The teacher as learner as well as the one who passes on knowledge, is a capable, bright, and expert professional. Excellence is the goal and standard of evaluation of a teacher education based on expertise, insight, and subject matter content. Teacher candidates would hold a liberal arts degree and would participate in professional education courses relevant to their major content area with master teachers as their models. The Holmes Group (1986) envisions "teachers with proven competence at work, in rigorous professional qualifications examinations, and in their own education" (p. 8). High standards for entry and continuation in the teaching profession are mandatory. One's rise in the profession's three levels (Instructor, Professional Teacher, and Career Professional) is similarly dependent on increasingly rigorous expectations culminating in doctoral level qualifications of the Career Professional.

The Holmes educator is an intellectual who is a subject matter specialist. Education is a continuing experience for the Holmes teacher. In their academic course requirements, according to the Holmes Group report (1986), teachers should gain "a sense of the intellectual structure

and boundaries of the discipline" (p. 16). The Holmes Group teacher education model attracts, "challenges and rewards the best minds" (p. 8).

Their epistemological grounding is reflected in their description of the "need for mastery ... of a core of enduring and fundamental ideas" (p. 47) for all teachers but especially elementary school teachers. To the Holmes writers, "teaching is actually about knowledge" (p. 47). The disciplines most closely connected to the perceived need in teacher education is an undergraduate education dedicated "to the historic tenets of liberal education" (p. 47). However, they, too, must be refurbished. Not a set of loosely connected classes in a liberal discipline but a solid and highly reasoned core of liberal arts experiences related to both the achievement of expertise in the major discipline and mastery in teaching those ideas to students. The Holmes Group (1986) summarizes their epistemological stand on teacher education: "The heart of the matter is the structure of knowledge and what knowledge is of most worth" (p. 51). It is an objective, subject oriented knowledge construct reached by the intellect and easily testable.

The Holmes Group aim is to "make the education of teachers intellectually more solid ... to recognize the differences in teachers' knowledge, skill, and commitment, in their education, certification, and work" (p. 4). Innate in the Holmes proposal is a hierarchy of teachers (three levels) and concomitant and professionally significant differences

among them. A new bureaucracy is necessary, according to the Holmes writers, to improve education. Other goals for teacher education include rigorous standards of entry into the profession, a greater sense of interconnectedness between universities and schools, making schools better places for teachers to work and learn, and providing teachers for American children, the country's future. Holmes wants to "challenge and reward the best minds now in teaching and attract others just as good" (p. 8).

Values for the Holmes Group proposers include intelligence, expertise, mastery, and excellence. The "dispositions, values, and ethical responsibilities that distinguish teaching from other professions" (p. 51) reflect their regard for an ethics of inquiry and professional judgment. Educators must represent the best in our societal and cultural values.

Cultural sensitivity refers to both that of the school and of the wider community. "Schools should be places where teachers can work and learn [and] ... in which students can learn more" (p. 4). The inter-connection of varied cultural patterns within the school and community is expected--including varied styles of learning and of constructing a knowledge base. Emphasis on a solid foundation of liberal arts specialization reflects allegiance to the Western cultural heritage. Whatever the cultural mix, teachers and students in the Holmes model

would be critical thinkers, compilers of knowledge, and high level performers on examinations.

Each, in his/her own way--teacher or student--would be a thoughtful investigator capable of evaluating data in a rational, objective manner. Sensitive to school needs and to the demands of the wider community, teachers would operate from a firm knowledge base. Their performance would be evaluated according to the standards of reasonableness, objectivity, and intellectual expertise.

There is a problem in implementing the Holmes method. It is the preparation of today's teachers which mirrors a nineteenth-century job description rather than a late twentieth-century professional position. To achieve the Holmes approach to knowledge accumulation and dispensation, teachers must have more time to think, investigate, and evaluate new programs, strategies, and alternative models for both teaching and learning. To understand the larger community and the needs of the school, teachers cannot be isolated in a classroom all day. For full professionalization of educators, all teachers, including elementary teachers, need to be differentiated.

Knowledge is an integral part of the entire process of becoming a teacher. Superficiality in content or skills which are simply mechanical responses inhibit professional growth. The study of schooling comprises an academic field and deserves assiduous attention along with continuous

growth in the liberal arts. Both aspects are integrated into a clinical experience where both professional knowledge and one's specialization in liberal arts are included. One's double expertise enables the educator to accurately gauge the qualifications of curricular and program practices, their alternatives, and their impact on a particular set of learners. The educated professional is aware of his/her responsibilities to students, their future, and the community.

The Holmes paradigm educator is suited to perform outstandingly because of a rigorous education, demanding examinations, and an exacting professional preparation. Observations, portfolios, and exhibitions all play a part in the professional experiences of the educator, with each of the three levels becoming more demanding in its norms. The teacher must excel in examinations of subject matter knowledge, in communicating a systematic understanding of teaching strategies, and in performing in a practical and reflective experience.

Although the educator's role varies in reference to one's place in the teaching hierarchy, each must demonstrate knowledge, skill, and a thoughtful approach to one's position and responsibilities. From the undergraduate who exemplifies "an engagement with learning" (p. 48) to the career professional who represents the essence of the knowledgeable professional, the educator is equipped to guide the learning of one's charges. They are paragons of ideas whose dynamic energies transform

the abstract or routine to an adventure of the mind. Holmes teachers combine tough-mindedness with sensitivity to the student. Their personal assessment of pupil learning would carry greater weight than the results of standardized exams. Interacting with the learner, the teacher, often using the Socratic method, identifies the superficial response and encourages a sincere desire to know more. Cognizant of generative ideas, Holmes educators motivate their students--partners in an engagement with ideas.

The approved environment for the Holmesian teacher is one as technologically and intellectually varied as that of any other professional. Within such a stimulating environment, the Holmes teacher is encouraged to rise through the ranks to become a specialist in curriculum development, teacher education, or school management. One does not have to leave teaching to achieve prominence, promotions, or professional respect. One is considered the knowledgeable professional whose talents are best displayed in an arena both personally and professionally rewarding.

Knowledge has a bi-level connotation to the Holmes writers. It includes both one's intellectual grasp of a chosen area of subject matter and an understanding of the body of ideas which comprise professional scholarship (including psychological, social, cultural, and pedagogical). Exacting standards of excellence are applied to both knowledge levels. The standards become increasingly demanding as one moves from one

role to the next. Those who excel must translate and communicate generative ideas to their students whose cultural contexts and learning styles may vary widely. The pedagogically skillful and well educated teacher leads students to achieve mastery of the core ideas of the curriculum.

Following the Holmesian scenario, teachers would meet learners at their level and relay curricular information to them successfully. It is the teachers' education which is the pivotal factor in both their success and that of their students. A profession as prestigious and as specialized as medicine or law, each with their own bodies of knowledge, is the goal of the Holmes Group. "Education is one of the arts and sciences since it applies tested modes of inquiry to a phenomenon of universal scope and significance. Education is the discipline of disciplines" (p. 51).

The Holmes Report writers resemble those of the Flexner Report in their envisionment of a profession founded on a definition and description of a body of knowledge that is specialized, idea centered, and conceptually evolving. The educational profession, for them, must meet exacting criteria if it is to attract the best candidates who will guide our country's youth.

To the question of how to evaluate the knowledge base of teachers, the Holmes Group (1986) responds with a battery of tests. Examinations--both academic and professional, and at all levels--test expertise, insight,

and performance. Instructors must demonstrate the ability to reason, read, write, and excel in a liberal arts specialty. Foundation subjects would be part of their undergraduate preparation. Each level presents increasingly more stringent demands on the candidates who must perform well on tests (usually essay), mount exhibitions, teach, and present portfolios of their professional growth. The Holmes writers are quick to acknowledge their multi-examination scenario requires a whole array of testing instruments, some of which are not yet available. They hold that "responsible credentialism" (p. 46) is the answer to a continuing need to upgrade and protect the profession.

The complete educator is intellectually able. Armed with proven expertise in one's specialty and demonstrated ability in handling pedagogical concepts and skills, the Holmes educator is able to perform at a high level in the professional hierarchy. This educator has the test scores and observation comments to prove achieved excellence.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Epistemological Methodology

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1964a) epistemology is rooted in perception. To him, "perception will again appear as the paradoxical phenomenon which renders being accessible to us" (p. 17). To know is first to perceive, to reflect on the perception, and then to return to the

percept with increased understanding. Percept and concept combined reciprocally describe the knowing act. One knows but always with some ambiguity and some incompleteness. Part of the world, perceptually based knowledge reflects the very ambiguity and immediacy of life itself. Each person understands the interaction with both conceptual constructs and with the unique insights of one's own perspective. Merleau-Ponty states (1965), "all my knowledge of the world ... is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world" (p. viii).

The intellect is not the sole or superior source for knowing but functions along with feeling, intuition, emotions, and physical energies. It is the entire person who knows and seeks further understanding. The body knows--in all its completeness. The object, too, whether person or event, is multi-faceted. Its entire being remains unplumbed and a continuing solicitation to the interrogator. Absolute and flawless knowledge is not part of the phenomenological lexicon. Incompleteness, ambiguity, and change permeate Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach. "Certainty is doubt" (Merleau-Ponty, 1965, p. 396).

In Merleau-Ponty's epistemology, the interrogator (the one who asks questions of the world), queries the self, the human condition, and the object or event with which one interacts.

> We ourselves are one sole continued question, a perceptual enterprise of taking our bearings on the constellations of the

> world ... every question, even that of simple cognition, is part of the continual question that is ourselves, of that appeal for totality to which no objective being answers. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, pp. 103-104)

Experiences in Merleau-Pontian epistemology are valuable when they are vital, innovative, creative, and lived. The learning act and its consequences also include insecurity, impermanence, and incompleteness. To seek knowledge, one accepts that both growth in understanding and a nagging sense of the unfinished coexist. Insight and ambiguity are companions in both human existence and in knowledge.

The person, the body, is the agent of knowing. Embodied we interrogate the world. We seek to know. For Merleau-Ponty (1964a), the body is "more than an instrument or a means, it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions" (p. 5). We give and receive messages from the world. The body, multi-dimensional in form, connects with a situation equally diverse structurally. The knower intends, moves toward, the object, drawing on its totality of temporal experiences and its perceptual powers. One comprehends as clarity and puzzlement intermingle. The zest to continue the knowing process impels the learner on. Not as a spectator, but as one completely involved in the process, the phenomenological interrogator is part of and continuous with the act of knowing. To Merleau-Ponty (1968), we are

> a perpetual enterprise of taking ... the bearings of things on our dimensions. The questions of curiosity of those of science are interiorly animated by the fundamental interrogation which appears naked in philosophy. (p. 104)

We learn multi-dimensionally, emotionally, socially, intellectually, physically, and aesthetically. We grow through our public and private learning experiences. Our understanding, a combination of both domains, provides a unique impress on the person or event we encounter. We contribute to the meaning of the situation just as the situation affects our perception of it.

Percept merges with concept as the one seeking knowledge widens his/her horizons. The personal sphere and that of the social and/or natural world coalesce. One's knowledge base grows. Utilizing the phenomenological method, the interrogator approaches the object (person or situation) presuppositionless--one avoids categorical constructs either theoretical or objective. One knows the other without overwhelming it with one's biases. Phenomenologically, the interrogator relates to but is never absorbed by the other. Integral to the dynamic process of knowing is an increasing sense of involvement as well as a continuing recognition of one's autonomy as a subject. Similarly, the other is comprehended with increasing acuity but also as an enigma. Tantalizing indeterminacy and gratifying productivity characterize the phenomenological epistemological

performance. A sense of immediacy, involvement, and excitement infuse the moment of learning.

To communicate one's findings, the subject uses language in its many forms. It links us to the world. Our knowledge, which comprises more than objective information, rests in our rootedness in the primordial existence and its discoveries are shared in speech.

> We learn to meaningfully handle language in which we install ourselves, long before learning from linguistics the intelligible principles upon which our tongue and every tongue is based. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 12)

The interrogator, the one who questions and advances the field of knowledge, engages in a dynamic interchange with the other--the object of knowing. The dialectical interchange includes both the questioner and the questioned. There is an interconnection but not absorption of one with the other. Both, in harmony as well as in retaining their own individual melodies, construct the act of knowing. As explained in Merleau-Ponty's (1968) concept of reversibility, we learn more ourselves and the other, become bonded, and yet retain our individual autonomies and our unique mysteries. Reversibility is described by Merleau-Ponty in The Visible and the Invisible (1968):

> It is the coiling over of the visible upon the seeing body, of the tangible upon the touching body, which is attested in

> particular when the body sees itself, touches itself seeing and touching the things. (p. 146)

The one who questions existence and seeks to attach meaning to it is the phenomenological contributor to knowledge.

All of the domain of experience provides channels to knowing. Their interplay and emphasis vary with the person and the situation. The results of the act of knowing are communicated through various instruments of speech. Our expressed insights, both individual and collective, enlarge our pool of knowledge. It is a continuing dialogue of one with the other. In Signs, Merleau-Ponty (1964b) describes the interchange as building a wall:

> There is said to be a wall between us and others, but it is a wall we build together, each putting his stone in the niche left by the other. Even reason's labors presuppose infinite conversations. (p. 19)

To know the meaning of being is an ongoing task. To communicate the quest and its discoveries, we employ language. Merleau-Ponty (1968) cites the philosopher's search for meaning and its reliance on language: "Language is not a mask over Being ... but ... the most valuable witness to Being" (p. 126).

The content of knowledge includes the subjective and the objective, the theoretical and the practical, and the public and the private. Each is

grounded in existence and first experienced through perception. The channels to knowledge are varied. Like life itself, knowledge is not an entity but a dynamic process. Individuals and groups contribute to and benefit from it as they respond to existential challenges in a changing world. In questioning, we are answered by the other and discover new solutions, new questions, and alternative perspectives on the world, others, and ourselves. Knowledge is always incomplete, continually being reformed, and the product of many generations of interrogators.

To evaluate knowledge, one must consider its multi-dimensionality, particularly its grounding in perception. Superficiality, abstract intellectualizing, or deterministic formulas are unacceptable to the phenomenologist. If one is to be judged knowledgeable, one must be completely engaged in the questioning act. One will discover its results are as multi-faceted as the quest itself. Phenomenologically, one discovers the truth in an experience. The meaning inherent in the situation will reflect the variability, inexactness, and ambiguity as well as the clarity, precision, and predictability of existence itself. Perception is the key. To quote Merleau-Ponty (1973): "There is no truth that can be conceived only outside the field of presence, outside the limits of some situation or some structure" (p. 107).

Questioning, constructing meaning, and validating that meaning within both general and situational parameters, the phenomenological

investigator constructs a store of knowledge. In a fluid state, it is perceptually based, evolving in a spiral fashion, and always incomplete.

Comparison/Contrast

The Holmes Report (1986) and Merleau-Ponty's (1964a; 1964b; 1965; 1968; 1973) phenomenological philosophy present epistemological models which invite comparison and contrast. Their epistemological methodologies suggest differing teacher education methodological models.

Dominant in the Holmes model is the mind as the active agent in knowledge transmission and accumulation; whereas, Merleau-Ponty's approach is perceptually-based. Subject matter is the focus for the Holmes Group writers--the phenomenologist directs the learner's attention to life as a lived experience. Various subject matter disciplines may be utilized, but they do not decide the parameters for inquiry. For the Holmes proposers, knowledge is objective. It is obtained and tested by standard scientific and/or scholarly procedures. For the Merleau-Ponty adherent, knowledge is subjective, gained and evaluated in situationally appropriate measures. The personal and private domains of knowledge interweave in a phenomenological approach or intentionality toward understanding the world. Following the Holmes methodology, one becomes an expert in handling conceptual understandings. Referring to Merleau-Ponty's

methodology, one demonstrates and relates knowledge to others in a holistic manner--including perceptual, intellectual, physical, and intuitional activities. The phenomenologist includes both general and unique perspectives on the field of understanding within the horizon of knowledge. Alternative styles of teaching and learning are natural concomitants to the phenomenological method. One knows the key concepts of a subject but one knows within the depth of personal perception and involvement. The Holmes writers appear to focus on the intellectual and scholarly as the base for knowledge.

The culture of the school and community are significant elements for the Holmes teacher and learner; one's cultural and social situation is equally important to the phenomenologist. Neither would espouse an isolated learner or a fortress school model. One could interpret the Holmesian teacher's cultural sensitivity as sympathy; whereas, the Merleau-Pontian educator would be empathic.

Descriptors of the Holmes Report epistemology include intellectual superiority, predictability, and clarity. The phenomenological epistemology includes multi-leveled learning, human-centeredness, and ambiguity.

The Holmes Report proposers support teachers and teachers as learners who theorize, utilize academically based strategies, and validate knowledge in a demonstrable manner. Merleau-Ponty encourages interrogating, having a dialectical interchange with an event or person, and

being as varied in one's approach to learning or teaching as the situation demands. Learning styles--both individual and group--are accepted and related to. A strong liberal arts background is expected in teacher candidates in the Holmes Report. Whatever one's place in the hierarchy, one is expected to be scholarly and intellectually eager. For the phenomenologist, a wider array of diverse talents are acceptable. One would assume no one intellectually weak or shoddy would be acceptable. But greater room for differences and more varied ways of attaining knowledge would be appropriate for a phenomenologist. It is difficult to conceive a rigid hierarchy of educators in a phenomenological model. However, there could exist an informal arrangement in which persons would assume different roles within the dynamics of a team effort. Fluidity describes the arrangements and roles of teacher, teacher as learner, and teacher as facilitator of knowledge. Similarly, their students would be involved in learning activities which included a gamut of experiences. Considerations of space, time, and significance frame the parameters of in-depth learning.

Both the Holmes educator and the Merleau-Ponty influenced one esteem language facility. The verbal virtuosity of the Holmes plan contrasts with the phenomenological language expressions which reflect individual involvement. The precision of the Holmes communication differs

from the phenomenological narrative that taps into the roots of human existence.

Clearly stated goals, an array of examinations, and specificity in teaching levels are elements of the Holmes scenario. Certification and credentialing are the means toward true professionalization. Emerging goals, evaluative measures which are individualized but nonetheless demanding, and a dynamic association of teachers and administrators would relate to a phenomenological teacher education model. Certification itself might be nonexistent or, if used, be the product of teacher, teacher educator, and regional/local cultural interchange.

The Holmes Report with its goal of a profession replete with entry, exit, and promotional standards requires an objective knowledge base and one intellectually gifted in obtaining and demonstrating conceptual understanding. Merleau-Ponty's epistemology is subjective, personal, and perceptual. Change, some lack of specificity in precise language of professional qualifications of teacher candidates, and an acceptance of the idiosyncratic and ambiguous could be disconcerting to those demanding a predetermined plan for teacher education.

A phenomenologist might question the rationality of a Holmes model with its strict three-tier plan and multitude of examinations if its goal is to be implemented nationally. Perhaps a few upper-level communities might aspire to the model. Many communities today find it difficult to

financially support present day levels of teacher remunerations and perquisites. Implementing the three-tier level--particularly the career professional--could be difficult for rural, disadvantaged, or economically blighted areas. The variety of local and regional needs and strengths challenges any uniform national plan. The phenomenological epistemological approach with its individualized, humanly centered, and perceptually based teacher education might, in its very fluidity, be a more natural and more educationally appropriate scenario for the variety of teacher candidates and the uniqueness of school situations.

The Holmes architectonic plan fosters categorization and transmission of knowledge. A phenomenological construct encourages individual development and continuing interrogation. The former appeals to clarity and precision in standards. The latter recognizes the ambiguous and the evolving in humanity's search for understanding.

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